

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LIBREV 01739 081055Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 EB-07

/096 W

-----101204 081449Z /42

R 081010Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBMASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9647

INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIBREVILLE 1739

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TP

SUBJECT: ATTEMPTED COUP IN SAO TOME

SUMMARY: GSTP PRESIDENT DA COSTA ANNOUNCED TO NATION  
JULY 5 THAT COUP PLOT HAD BEEN DISCOVERED AND RING  
LEADERS ARRESTED. HE ALLEGED THAT PLOT, WHICH WAS TO  
HAVE INCLUDED KILLING OR IMPRISONING CURRENT GOVERNMENT,  
WAS ORGANIZED BY COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS ON ISLANDS  
AND SUPPORTED BY FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONISTS. INVESTIGATIONS  
ARE CONTINUING, HE ADDED, AND MORE ARRESTS EXPECTED.  
EMBASSY BELIEVES "COUP PLOT" HAS BEEN STAGED  
OR ITS SERIOUSNESS EXAGGERATED TO SERVE DA COSTA'S OWN  
PURPOSES. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 5, SAO TOME PRESIDENT DA COSTA READ PRE-  
PARED STATEMENT OVER NATIONAL RADIO REPORTING DISCOVERY  
OF PLOT TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO DA COSTA,  
"REVOLUTIONARY VIGILANCE OF POPULATION" UNCOVERED COUP  
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LIBREV 01739 081055Z

PLOTTERS AND RINGLEADERS HAVE SINCE BEEN ARRESTED. IN-  
VESTIGATION IS CONTINUING, HE SAID, AND MORE ARRESTS ARE  
EXPECTED.

2. COUP WAS SUPPORTED BY "PORTUGUESE COLONIALSITS" WHO  
WISHED TO INSTALL IMPERIALISTIC DICTATORSHIP IN SAO TOME,  
DA COSTA SAID. PLOTTERS ON ISLANDS WERE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES

WHO HAD TIES TO FORMER COLONIAL REGIME, DA COSTA ALLEGED, ADDING CHARGE THAT THIS GROUP WAS ABETTED BY SEPARATIST MOVEMENT IN PRINCIPE WHICH PLANNED TO SET UP A KING ON THAT TINY ISLAND. DA COSTA ALSO INDICATED THAT COUP WAS LINKED TO NEFARIOUS "COBRA 77" MOVEMENT WHICH HE SAID WAS GROUP OF RADICALLY CONSERVATIVE PORTUGUESE WHO HAD FORMULATED PLAN TO OVERTHROW LUSOPHONE GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA AS WELL AS EVENTUALLY TO "DESTABILIZE" ALL PROGRESSIVE AFRICAN STATES.

3. COUP WAS PLANNED WITH THREE OBJECTIVES, ACCORDING TO DA COSTA. FIRST STEP WAS TO DISCREDIT GOVERNMENT AND SOW DISSENSION IN PARTY RANKS THROUGH DISTRIBUTION OF PAMPHLETS CRITICIZING DA COSTA AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT. SECOND OBJECTIVE WAS TO "DESTABILIZE" COUNTRY'S ECONOMY THROUGH WORK SLOWDOWNS AND IRRESPONSIBILITY BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND IN PRIVATE SECTOR. THIRD PART OF PLAN, SAID DA COSTA, WAS ARMED ATTACK TO BE CARRIED OUT PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION JULY 12 WHICH WOULD HAVE EITHER KILLED OR IMPRISONED ALL MEMBERS OF ACTUAL GOVERNMENT. DA COSTA ALSO MENTIONED THAT AT ONE TIME PLAN HAD BEEN TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT LAST MAY WHILE HE WAS IN NIGERIA FOR SHORT VISIT, BUT THIS FAILED WHEN ARMED FORCES REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH COUP ORGANIZERS.

4. DA COSTA MENTIONED NO NAMES NOR LINKED ANY AFRICAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LIBREV 01739 081055Z

GOVERNMENTS TO PLOTTING. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES HAD SMUGGLED ARMS INTO SAO TOME THROUGH "NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES." THROUGHOUT DA COSTA'S STATEMENT, HE REPEATEDLY EXHORTED SAO TOMEANS TO REACT TO PLOT BY REDOUBLING EFFORTS TO INCREASE SAO TOME'S PRODUCTION AND IMPROVE ITS ECONOMY. STATEMENT WAS REPEATED AT BEGINNING OF EVERY RADIO NEWS BROADCAST JULY 5 AND 6.

5. EMBOFF HAS DISCUSSED SITUATION WITH ACTING SAO TOME CHARGE AND OTHER TWO SOURCES IN LIBREVILLE WHO GENERALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT EVENTS IN ISLANDS. CHARGE ADMITTED STATEMENT SEEMED "BIZARRE" AND WONDERED HOW ANYONE COULD SERIOUSLY PLAN TO CREATE KINGDOM OF PRINCIPE. NON-GOVERNMENT SOURCES ARE CONVINCED THAT "COUP " WAS STAGED AFFAIR DESIGNED TO PREPARE WAY FOR PURGE IN ISLANDS BY DA COSTA OR TO EXCITE SAO TOMEANS TO WORK HARDER TO PROP UP SAGGING ECONOMY.

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY AGREES WITH ABOVE INTERPRETATION. DA COSTA'S STATEMENT WAS READ IN CAREFUL, UNEMOTIONAL WAY AND GAVE IMPRESSION THAT IMPROVING WORK PERFORMANCE

WAS MOST IMPORTANT POINT. WHILE THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME ARRESTS OF SAO TOMEAN DISSIDENTS WHO HAD BEEN CRITICAL OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE, SEEMS HARDLY LIKELY THAT PORTUGUESE ELEMNTS HAVE HOPES OF ESTABLISHING "REACTIONARY DICTATORSHIP" THERE. END COMMENT.

7. PLANS FOR JULY 12 INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION GOING AHEAD AS SCHEDULED AND AMBASSADOR, PAO AND DEFENSE ATTACHES FROM KINSHASA WILL ATTEND. VISIT WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE OF WHAT REALLY HAS HAPPENED IN THESE ISOLATED ISLANDS. STEIGMAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, PLOTS, ARRESTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 08-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977LIBREV01739  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770243-0292  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** LIBREVILLE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770778/aaaacpwt.tel  
**Line Count:** 126  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 35dc146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION AF  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1923839  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ATTEMPTED COUP IN SAO TOME SUMMARY: GSTP PRESIDENT DA COSTA ANNOUNCED TO NATION JULY 5 THAT COUP PLOT HAD BEENDISCOVERED AND RING  
**TAGS:** PINT, PINS, TP  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvkey:** odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/35dc146f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009